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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 6 July 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has continued to deteriorate as result of ongoing illegal policies and actions and relentless provocations by Israel, the occupying Power, and its illegal settlers. The situation is highly volatile and unsustainable and requires urgent redress by the international community to bring a halt to the massive violations that continue to be perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people and to salvage the chances for peace that remain before us.

Far from seeking to make peace, Israel is actually intensifying its violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in all areas with the aim of entrenching its control of the Palestinian land and its subjugation of the Palestinian people. The occupying Power's illegal and aggressive actions continue to exacerbate the already harsh conditions being endured by the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation, and to undermine the international efforts to resume peace negotiations on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-June 1967 borders.

In the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian civilian population continues to be collectively punished by the occupying Power's ruthless, illegitimate blockade that has now entered its fifth year. Reconstruction of damaged and destroyed homes and vital infrastructure continues to be impeded by the blockade and Israel's ongoing restrictions on entry of construction and other essential materials, further delaying and complicating recovery efforts. The blockade continues to deepen poverty in Gaza, as restoration of livelihoods and the normal functioning of businesses also continue to be obstructed, due to continued severe restrictions on imports and exports, ensuring that the unemployment level, which now stands at around a shocking 65 per cent of the population, remains high, and that aid dependency also remains staggering at nearly 80 per cent.

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In this regard, it must be clarified that, despite so-called "measures to ease" the blockade, Israel continues to impose a land, air and naval blockade on the Gaza Strip in total defiance of the repeated calls by the international community, including by Member States in United Nations resolutions and official statements and declarations and by civil society from all corners of the world. In this regard, the Palestinian people and their leadership recognize with deepest respect and gratitude the efforts of the hundreds of civil society activists, including those partaking in the Freedom Flotilla, who are exerting noble efforts to draw attention to Israel's cruel blockade of the Gaza Strip, to mobilize international action to compel the occupying Power to end the blockade, and to deliver needed humanitarian aid and moral support to the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The occupying Power also continues to commit acts of military aggression against the Gaza Strip. In recent days, the Israeli occupying forces launched air strikes against areas in central Gaza. In such an attack yesterday, 5 July, the occupying forces killed two Palestinian men, Mohammed Sa'eed Abu Jazar and Kamal Abu Muammar, and wounded one man and today another man was also wounded in a separate airstrike that also caused substantial damage to property. In this regard, it must be underscored that such military attacks against civilian areas are unlawful under international humanitarian law and constitute grave acts of terror, provocation and incitement against the Palestinian people.

At the same time, Israel has been unrelenting in its illegal drive to colonize the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially areas in and around Occupied East Jerusalem. In the recent period, land confiscations, settlement construction and home demolitions have intensified as the occupying Power clearly seeks to create even more illegal facts on the ground and forcibly alter the demographic composition of the Territory in the face of mounting international demands and pressure to bring an end to the occupation that began in 1967. Indeed, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to flagrantly violate its legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and under relevant United Nations resolutions and to blatantly defy the international community's continuous calls for an immediate cessation of all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

While it is not possible in such a brief letter to enumerate in detail the scope and scale of Israel's colonization activities in the recent period, the following regrettable developments give an indication of the severity and extent of such violations, which continue to receive the support of Israeli officials, including the Prime Minister, Defence and other Ministers, Knesset parliamentarians and others:

- On 19 June, it was reported that Israel approved the expansion of 2,000 units in the illegal settlement of "Ramat Shlomo". This was announced in addition to the early declaration to construct another 1,500 units in the illegal settlements of "Har Homa" (Jabal Abu Ghneim) and "Pisgat Ze'ev".
- At the start of this month, tenders were issued for the construction of 300 units in the illegal settlement of "Beitar Elit" in addition to another 40 units and 46 units in the illegal settlements of "Efrat" and "Shomron" in the Bethlehem and Nablus areas respectively.

- On 1 July, confiscation orders were issued for another 189 dunums of land in the village of Qaryut near Nablus, an area that is surrounded by seven illegal Israeli settlements.

- Demolition of Palestinian homes and structures in East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley continued, with a report revealing that demolitions in the Jordan Valley alone have displaced and left homeless more than 700 Palestinians since the start of this year. A recent report by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has shown that in the month of May alone, home demolitions in the West Bank and particularly in East Jerusalem displaced 67 children, a record high this year.

- The Israeli Interior Minister announced recently the intention to further expand the municipal boundaries of Occupied East Jerusalem, with the aim of incorporating within the City's boundaries yet another illegal settlement.

- On 3 July, the Israeli Transport Minister provocatively proposed the "Hebrewizing" of road signs and town names, especially in Occupied East Jerusalem, with the aim of further Judaizing the city.

At the same time, illegal Israeli settlers, many of them armed extremists, have intensified their acts of terror and destruction throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 7 June, settlers set fire to a mosque in the village of Al-Mughayyir near Ramallah and defiled its walls with graffiti. This shocking act of terror was claimed to have been committed as part of the settlers' so-called "price tag" policy aimed at sabotaging any attempts to cease settlement construction or dismantle so-called "outposts". Settlers also continued to attack Palestinian agricultural properties, with armed settlers torching dozens of Palestinian olive trees in Bil'in and setting fire to at least 15 dunums of farmland in an area south of Nablus in mid-June. These depraved acts followed the provocations and incitement exhibited by extremist settlers during the so-called "Jerusalem Day" events in early June, when, under the protection of the occupying forces, settlers marched through the city harassing, intimidating and threatening the Palestinian civilian population.

In addition to all of the above, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to raid West Bank villages and to detain and imprison Palestinian civilians, adding to the thousands who remain in Israeli jails and exacerbating the hardships endured by their families. Last month, the Israeli Prime Minister declared Israel's plans to further "toughen" conditions on Palestinians prisoners, who already suffer under inhumane and unhygienic conditions in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

This is just a synopsis of the extremely disturbing and deplorable conditions being endured by the Palestinian people under Israel's occupation. It is a situation that continues to heighten tensions and sensitivities and to mar the hopes for a peaceful and secure future, free from foreign occupation and all of its attendant brutalities. It is a situation that is undermining all regional and international efforts aimed at justly and peacefully resolving the conflict and is threatening to destroy the two-State solution, making it less and less viable with each passing day.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian people and their leadership remain committed to the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-June 1967 borders and remain committed to peaceful, diplomatic, political and non-violent means to achieve this goal and to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their

legitimate national aspirations. Accordingly, the Palestinian leadership will continue to exert all efforts to gain support for its continuing endeavour to bring a complete end to the Israeli military occupation in all its manifestations and to ensure the realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital at the earliest possible date.

We call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold their responsibilities in this regard and to act upon their legal obligations to address the ongoing violations being committed by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Only serious, coordinated action can compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease forthwith all its illegal activities and to commit to peaceful negotiations based on the internationally-endorsed parameters enshrined in the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 394 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 June 2011 (A/ES-10/521-S/2011/343) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations